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Patagonia sues drag queen Pattie Gonia for trademark infringement

By Blake Brittain

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An empty courtroom is seen at the New York State Supreme Court in Manhattan, New York City, U.S., August 21, 2020. REUTERS/Andrew Kelly/File photo Purchase Licensing Rights

Companies

Patagonia Inc Follow

Jan 21 (Reuters) - Outdoor apparel company Patagonia on Wednesday sued drag queen and environmental activist Pattie Gonia for trademark infringement, claiming the play on its name could create consumer confusion.

Patagonia said in its complaint in California federal court that the performer, whose given name is Wyn Wiley, uses the Pattie Gonia name on clothing and for advertising services that overlap with the brand's, including "motivational speaking services in support of environmental sustainability" and "organizing, arranging, and conducting trail and hiking events."

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Spokespeople for Wiley did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the complaint.

"We want Pattie to have a long and successful career and make progress on issues that matter – but in a way that respects Patagonia's intellectual property and ability to use our brand to sell products and advocate for the environment," Patagonia said in a statement.

Wiley, an environmentalist and LGBT activist, has partnered with outdoors-focused groups and companies including REI, The North Face and Backcountry, according to his website. The lawsuit said Wiley agreed in 2022 to "not use Pattie Gonia in any form on product" or imitate the company's branding, according to an email exchange included in the complaint.

Patagonia said that Wiley began selling infringing apparel with phrases including "Pattie Gonia Hiking Club" despite the agreement. The complaint also cited a pair of Pattie Gonia's gloves and a top worn by the drag queen that allegedly featured imitations of the Patagonia logo. The lawsuit said Wiley's merchandise falsely implies that Patagonia has endorsed or collaborated with the performer.

Patagonia said it had filed the lawsuit specifically in response to applications filed by Wiley for federal trademarks covering the use of "Pattie Gonia" on products and services that compete with the company's.

Patagonia requested a "nominal" $1 in monetary damages and court orders blocking Wiley from selling infringing merchandise or receiving federal "Pattie Gonia" trademarks.

The case is Patagonia Inc v. Pattie Gonia Productions, U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, No. 2:26-cv-00586.

For Patagonia: Gregory Gilchrist, Ryan Bricker and Sophy Tabandeh of Verso Law

For Wiley: attorney information not yet available

Reporting by Blake Brittain in Washington

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Blake Brittain
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Blake Brittain reports on intellectual property law, including patents, trademarks, copyrights and trade secrets, for Reuters Legal. He has previously written for Bloomberg Law and Thomson Reuters Practical Law and practiced as an attorney.

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